



Chapare business received recognition award for its support to Alternative Development

U.S. Ambassador to Bolivia David Greenlee presented today a public recognition award to Bolivian Palm Heart Factory (Fábrica Boliviana de Palmitos - FABOPAL) in the Chapare region, for its support to licit economy growth and alternative development in the region.

This recognition was presented during an official visit of Bolivian government ministers and the Ambassadors of Panama, Costa Rica, Japan, and the United States to the Chapare region, where they witnessed the progress made in the fight against narcotics trafficking and in favor of comprehensive alternative development in the zone.

FABOPAL, founded in 1998, is a pioneer business in Chapare. It currently employs directly 855 families who produce palm heart. These families are part of a licit productive chain that promotes cooperation and food supplies at convenient prices. The Palm heart industry represents one of the most promising business opportunities to increase economic competitiveness in the Chapare.

FABOPAL operates under an ISO 9001 quality certification. This means the company is approved to export its produce to international markets. In 2004 FABOPAL exported more than 95,000 palm heart boxes (approximately 30 percent of the region's total production) at an estimated value of 1.5 million dollars, to markets in Spain, Israel, France, Argentina, Chile, Uruguay, and the United States.

Last year palm heart crops in Chapare grew to 8,550 hectares. This growth represents an increase of 187 percent over that of 1999. Many farmers cultivating palm heart are former coca growers who opted for developing a legal business.

The support given to FABOPAL is part of the regular cooperation from the Government of the United States to Bolivia, which amounts to approximately 150 million dollars annually. US\$ 100 million are channeled in the form of donations through the United States Agency for International Development, USAID. The goal of this assistance is to improve the income and health of the most poverty-stricken people, to strengthen management of natural resources, to promote growth of a licit economy in coca-producing zones, and to increase people's confidence in democratic institutions and processes.